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MALAY MAGIC.

Malay Magic; being an Introduction to the Folklore and Popular Religion of the Malay Peninsula. By W. W. Skeat. Pp. xiv + 685, and numerous plates and illustrations. (Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1900.)

THE object of this interesting and important work is set forth on the title-page with such clearness that the reviewer and reader are spared some trouble in defining it, and it is pleasing to be able to say that the author exhibits the same clearness throughout the hundreds of pages which he has devoted to the discussion of his subject. Speaking broadly, Mr. Skeat's volume is divided into six sections or chapters, which indicate by their length the relative importance of the matters of which they treat, and the well-chosen illustrations do much to enlighten the reader of the work on many points which do not fall naturally under the heading of facts of folklore. Mr. Skeat's book differs greatly from the works on folklore which appear from time to time, for it contains, not only what seems to us to be an exhaustive statement of facts which he has collected and arranged with care and discretion, but a series of deductions made after due consideration of the general principles which have, consciously or unconsciously, guided man in all ages and in all countries in working out theories as to the relations which exist between the animate and inanimate in nature. Many travellers and sojourners in foreign lands and remote islands have written books on the folklore of their inhabitants, but the greater number of them have been characterised by haste, and by a lack of knowledge of the fundamental facts of primitive anthropology. Moreover, it has frequently happened that, although their writers have given their facts correctly, they have not given all that might have been given had their own knowledge of them at first hand been sufficiently good to draw forth from the natives all that might have been extracted from them. Mr. Skeat has given abundant time to his subject, and as he has relied for guidance in difficult matters upon such works as Prof. E. B. Tylor's "Primitive Culture," the non-expert will feel that he is in safe hands. Mr. Skeat's years of residence in the Malay States gave him unwonted facilities for collecting information, and his official position and knowledge of the native dialects enabled him to make the fullest use of his opportunities. Another fact must be remembered. The influence of the West upon the East grows stronger every year, and the systems of the white man and government according to modern Western ideas, which, sooner or later, he invariably succeeds in imposing upon the coloured man, are not favourable to the preservation of native superstitions and beliefs. Little by little they are set aside, and eventually they disappear; thus frequently it happens that information which the student of comparative folklore would consider priceless for his studies is lost for ever. Mr. Skeat has done well in collecting such information in the Malay Peninsula whilst it is still to be obtained, and we can only hope that other officials who have the time and opportunity for collecting an-

thropological facts may emulate his devotion and industry.

According to Malay views in general, the earth and the sea were formed, each in seven stages, after the light, which was an emanation from the Deity, had become the "world-ocean." The earth was surrounded by a ring of mountains which kept it in its place, and served as the abode for legions of spirits. This mountain is, of course, the old Arab mountain of Kâf, from which, as Yâkût says, "all other mountains are derived." Certain sages, however, hold other views, and describe how the Kâbah, or home of the famous Black Stone at Mekka, the navel of the earth, was made immediately after God made himself manifest by his tokens the sun and moon. Next, the angel Gabriel killed the great serpent Sakâtîmuna, and the description of the subsequent disposal of her body forcibly recalls the Babylonian account of the fight between Merodach and Tiâmat. In fact, it seems pretty clear that Semitic cosmogonies have been drawn upon by the Malay theologians for several of the above theories. In shape, the earth is oval, and it revolves upon its own axis once every three months. Day and night are caused by the sun, which is a circular body moving round the earth. The sky is made of stone or "bed rock," and the stars are merely holes which let light through from the place of light above. An earthquake is caused by the buffalo which supports the earth on its horns, throwing it from the tip of one horn on to the tip of the other; this buffalo stands on an island in the midst of the nether ocean. The tides are caused by a huge crab moving in and out of his cavern, which is situated at the root of the Pauh Janggi tree. Eclipses are the result of a monster dragon trying to swallow the sun and moon; and indeed any untoward movement in nature is attributed to the movements of beasts of enormous size or dragons.

The appearance of man upon the earth is accounted for in various ways, but it appears that all Malay explanations of his origin are based upon Arabic legends of the creation of man by Allah, who is said to have fashioned him out of earth, air, fire and water. The version of one legend, printed by Mr. Skeat on pp. 19-20, with its mention of Michael, Gabriel and Izrafel, proclaims the source from which it was derived. The body is composed of earth, air, fire and water, and with these elements are connected four essences—the soul or spirit with air, love with fire, concupiscence with earth, and wisdom with water. But the works of Arabic writers on such matters were not the only authorities consulted by the early Malay philosophers, for Greek authors of treatises on the composition of man are often quoted. Passing over the consideration of the sanctity of the body for want of space, we come to the mention of the soul, which is described as a thin, unsubstantial human image or mannikin, which is temporarily absent from the body in sleep, trance and disease; after the death of the body, the soul departs from it for ever. It is usually invisible, but it is supposed to be as big as the thumb, and to resemble the body in shape, proportion and complexion; it is of an impalpable, filmy, shadowy substance, and causes no displacement in the body into which it enters. It possesses all the attributes of the body to

which it gives life, and it suffers from all its disabilities; sickness is supposed to be caused by its absence from the body, and the soul may be abducted from it by unlawful means. The human soul is seven-fold, and it seems, at times, as if each was independent, for in certain ceremonies an abode is provided for each. The idea that a man possesses several souls is very old, and in Egyptian religious texts it may be traced back to the period of the earliest dynasties, about six thousand years ago. The number seven is, of course, and always has been, a magical number, and in ceremonies which are intended to do good, as well as those in which the object is to do evil, it plays a prominent part. In Babylonian and Assyrian magical texts we find the seven evil spirits of the deep, and the Mesopotamian underworld possessed seven gates; it must not be forgotten, too, the famous temple of Nebo at Borsippa, which tradition identifies with the Tower of Babel, was built in seven stages.

When we come to discuss Malay gods, we find the subject to be one of some difficulty. In the old religion, which the Malay professed to throw off when he adopted Muhammadanism, his ideas had formulated the existence of a large number of nature powers which closely resemble the Hindu gods found in Brahmanism; and before he adopted these as the objects of his worship, he seems to have peopled heaven and earth with myriads of spirits. To this day, when in trouble, he cries out, not to the Allah preached by Muhammad, nor to the deities which the Brahman religion made known to him, but to the evil spirits which his ancestors worshipped and feared untold centuries ago. It has been the same in all ages and in all countries, and the nations which become "converted" to a new religion in reality only drop the observances connected with their old faiths; and although they may tear down the shrines of old gods and build others to new ones, they do not succeed in uprooting from their minds the beliefs and ideas of which the overthrown shrines were the outward and visible signs. In spite of the teaching of Muhammad and the Brahmans, the Malay still believes that every department of nature is presided over by a "god" who must be propitiated by man, and to be specially honoured and revered are such gods as Bataru Guru, Bataru Kala, Bataru Indra, and Bataru Bismu; the greatest of this group is the first. It is interesting to note that native influence has succeeded in introducing into the Malay pantheon a number of gods of the sea, which from certain aspects are identified with older terrestrial gods. Many of the Jinn, or evil spirits of the Arabs, have been identified with old Hindu spirits, and the view held by the Malay on the importance of such beings may be gathered from the fact that it was believed to be possible to buy them from the Shêkh of the Jinn at Mekka, at prices varying from ninety to a hundred dollars each!

More than three-quarters of Mr. Skeat's volume are occupied with a description of the magic rites which the Malay connects with the various departments of nature, and with the life of man. This is not to be wondered at, for it is clear at a glance that there is no event in his life, however trivial and apparently unimportant, which, unless properly protected by magic rites and ceremonies, may give hostile devils and fiends an opportunity for

doing undreamed-of mischief to the wretched mortal whom accident or design has left unguarded. We regret that we cannot follow Mr. Skeat through his description of birth-spirits and birth-ceremonies, and through the whole period of a man's life from the cradle to the grave, as sketched by him, for our space is exhausted, and the reader can study for himself the curious Malay customs which concern betrothals, marriages and deaths. Many of them have their counterparts in other countries, but not a few are peculiar to the Malay. As we read of them we cannot help wondering how, if the pious Malay fulfils all his religious obligations, he ever finds time to do anything else. It is improbable in these days that many men are found who are able to carry out all the religious performances enumerated by Mr. Skeat, and it is much to be hoped that the influence of the English will drive many of them out of existence. Meanwhile a good and careful record of Malay sorcery, witchcraft and demonology, which is invaluable for the study of comparative religion and folklore, has been given us by Mr. Skeat, and there is no doubt that he has laid anthropologists and ethnographers and Oriental archæologists under a heavy debt of gratitude.

THE NANSEN NORTH POLAR EXPEDITION.

The Norwegian North Polar Expedition, 1893-96: Scientific Results. Edited by Fridtjof Nansen. Vol. i. *The Jurassic Fauna of Cape Flora, Franz Josef Land.* By J. F. Pompeckj. With a geological sketch of Cape Flora and its neighbourhood by Fridtjof Nansen. Pp. 147; with 3 plates. *Fossil Plants from Franz Josef Land.* By A. G. Nathorst. Pp. 26; with 2 plates. *An Account of the Birds.* By R. Collett and F. Nansen. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900.)

THE second chapter of the first volume of the "Scientific Results" of the Nansen North Polar Expedition opens with a geological sketch of Cape Flora and its neighbourhood by the leader of the expedition. It was a wise determination, on the part of those responsible for the publication of the results, to issue the several articles in English. The policy, too frequently followed, of writing important scientific papers in the language of the country where they are published, tends to place serious obstacles in the way of those who endeavour to follow the researches of Continental investigators. It is narrowness of view, rather than true patriotism, that compels authors to publish their results in languages which cannot be read by the great majority of scientific workers.

The geological investigation of Cape Flora, Franz Josef Land, was undertaken by Dr. Reginald Koettlitz, the geologist of the Jackson-Harmsworth Expedition, during the years 1894-97. Dr. Nansen's residence at "Elmwood," as the guest of Mr. Jackson, during a period of rather less than two months, afforded him an opportunity of visiting the most important localities in company with Dr. Koettlitz; the information he collected bears testimony to the good use which was made of this short visit. Nansen has given us a clear account, accompanied by diagrammatic sketches and photographs, of the geology of Cape Flora. This portion of Franz Josef